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Church Papers No. 1

THE VALIDITY

OF

NON-PRELATICAL ORDINATION

BY THE

REV. GEORGE PARK FISHER
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PREFACE

THE thanks of the Board of Publication are due to the distinguished scholar who has furnished this number of its Church Papers. It will no doubt be observed that the writer speaks from his own ecclesiastical standpoint, which is that of a catholic-hearted Congregationalism. No effort has been made on his part to adapt his language to the peculiar views of Church polity which obtain among us; nor was there either expectation or desire on the Board's part that he should so do. It was desired simply that he permit our people to share the fruits of his examination of a theory of Church polity which denies the validity of the ministerial orders alike of the Congregational and of the Presbyterian Churches.

THE VALIDITY OF NON-PRELATICAL ORDINATION

THIS paper is based upon a Lecture, in a series established by Paul Dudley, Chief Justice of the Province of Massachusetts, which was delivered by the writer in the Chapel of Harvard University in the year 1888. The design of that Lecture, as that design was defined and explained by the founder, was purely defensive.*

His purpose was not to provide the means for an attack upon the polity of the Anglican Communion. In such an attack I should have no disposition to take part. Of the merits, and the claims to respect, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as it exists at present in Great Britain, in the United States, and in other English-speaking communities, I should esteem it a grateful task to speak. On the services rendered by that Church in times past,—on the services,

*The terms of the foundation are as follows: "The fourth and last Lecture I would have for the maintaining, explaining, and proving the validity of the ordination of ministers or pastors of the churches, and so their administration of the sacraments or ordinances of religion, as the same hath been practiced in New England, from the first beginning of it, and so continued at this day. Not that I would any ways invalidate Episcopal ordination, as it is commonly called and practiced in the Church of England; but I do esteem the method of ordination as practiced in Scotland, at Geneva, and among the dissenters in England, and in the churches in this country, to be very safe, scriptural, and valid; and that the great Head of the Church, by his blessed Spirit, hath owned, sanctified and blessed them accordingly, and will continue so to do to the end of the world. Amen." The first of the Dudley Lectures was delivered in 1755.

likewise, which it is rendering at present, to our common Christianity, it would be pleasant to expatiate. With the advantages and with the disadvantages—whatever they may be—of Prelacy, as a method of Church organization, we have, in this paper, nothing to do.* It is only with a certain theory, on the basis of which the Episcopal system, since the accession of the Stuarts to the English throne, and especially since the Restoration, has frequently been maintained, that we are now concerned. According to that particular theory, Prelacy is not only a lawful method of ecclesiastical government; it is not only a method which is commended to favor by ancient usage, and is conducive in various ways to the welfare of Christian people, but it is the only lawful method of Church organization. Without a distinct order of bishops—so it is contended—a Church ceases to be a Church. Ordination by these bishops, who are alleged to form an unbroken line, running back to the Apostles, is pronounced essential to the exercise of the functions of the Christian ministry. Without it, we are told, there is no valid administration of the Sacrament. According to this view, Prelacy, and Prelacy founded, in the way just indicated, on Apostolic Succession, is necessary not merely to the well-being, but to the very being of a Church. The creed of a Church may be orthodox; it may, like the Church of Scotland, or the Church of the Huguenots, count on its roll a shining list of heroic martyrs; its ministry may be faithful shepherds of the flock, eloquent, fervent, full of the spirit of self-sacrifice; if they have not been inducted into office by prelatical bishops standing in the line of the succession, they are acting without authority, and in dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as in every

*The words "Prelacy" and "Prelatical," instead of "Episcopacy" and "Episcopal," are used in this paper to avoid ambiguity, since the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches claim to be *episcopal* in the literal and scriptural sense of this phraseology.

other function which is conceived to pertain to the ministry, their proceeding is without warrant, or promise of blessing. They have assumed an office for which they hold no commission.

The question might be raised whether any such official continuity, as the High Church theory involves, can be made out to have existed in any branch of the Church. May there not be, here and there, a break—here and there a missing link in the long chain that stretches back through all those misty and troubled ages? But I do not care to linger upon subordinate points of this nature. The main question is a broad, historical one. Did Christ and the Apostles, did the founders of the Church, really institute the Episcopate as a distinct, superior office; and, moreover, did they decree that the door into the ministry should be opened and shut exclusively by a clerical order thus created, and empowered to hand down their sacred prerogatives to successors to the end of time?

If we examine the literature of the New Testament and of the period immediately following, we find one fact, at least, that is too plain to be disputed: organization was a gradual thing. There was from the outset a profession of faith in Jesus as the Christ; there was baptism, initiating the convert into the company, scattered far and wide, of his followers. These followers were associated in fraternities, in the several towns where they lived. Certain offices, after models furnished by Jewish synagogues, and partly, it would seem, by Gentile societies, both municipal and private, grew up, one after another, as necessity called for them. There were Deacons, and, in a portion of the churches, Deaconesses, to look after the poor. Within the period covered by the New Testament Scriptures, we find that in various churches there are pastors to whom is given a kind of oversight or superintendence of affairs. In each church or town there was a plurality of these min-

isters. This is now an admitted fact. It is, also, conceded that these pastors stood on an equality, and that the titles "bishop" and "elder" were applied to them indiscriminately.* Bishops and elders being the same, there was not

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*Dr. Edwin Hatch has presented the theory that in the Gentile churches, early in the apostolic age, there were, side by side with the "presbyters" (to whom belonged matters involved in pastoral guidance and discipline), "bishops" who attended to the cultus and to external affairs—in particular to the reception and distribution of alms. This combination, he thinks, succeeded a still earlier state of things when the same officers who were called "presbyters" in the Jewish churches were styled "bishops" in the Gentile churches—the offices being equivalent. There was, first, an interchange of names, and then, in some way not easy to be explained, a combination of "bishops" and "presbyters" in each of the same Gentile churches. (See the article "Priest," by Dr. Hatch, in Smith and Cheetham's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," Vol. II, p. 1700.) Dr. A. Harnack and some other scholars have concurred in this general view. But this theory rests on a precarious foundation. If there were not elders at Philippi, the functions of elders must have been exercised by the "bishops" there (Phil. i, 1). The elders are spoken of in I Peter v, 2, as exercising "episcopal" oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες). But Dr. Hatch, as I have just explained, holds that the two classes of officers, "in very early times," within the limits of the apostolic age, were combined in one body, the members of which were designated indiscriminately "presbyters" or "bishops." (See Hatch's Bampton Lectures: "The Organization of the Early Christian Churches," p. 38.) When the Pastoral Epistles were written, it is admitted that "bishops" and "elders" were synonymous (Titus i, 5, 7; I Tim. iii, 1, 8, where the two offices are those of bishop and deacon).

A word may be added concerning the "angels" of the Apocalypse. The reference is not to pastors, but either to celestial guardians or to the idea or spirit of the church, personified. The more probable date of the Apocalypse (A. D. 68) would make the supposed fact of a presiding pastor in the churches an anachronism. Apart from this consideration, there is decisive internal evidence in the Apocalypse against such an interpretation. See Düsterdieck (in Meyer's Commentary) and Bishop Lightfoot's Philippians, p. 198. "Whatever may be the exact conception," says Lightfoot," "he [the angel] is identified with and made responsible for it [the church] to a degree wholly unsuited to any human officer."

in any church a bishop above the elders. There was no higher guardianship except what was found in the authority and influence of the Apostles. At a later day, after we pass into the second century, we find that by one of the elders in each board a certain precedence is enjoyed, and that to this elder—for he is often called an elder—the title of bishop is given as an official name. This was Episcopacy in its primitive form—a principal pastor in each town or city church, with his associate council of presbyters. It was something, be it observed, quite different from the diocesan Episcopacy with which later times have been conversant. It may, for the sake of convenience, be termed parochial Episcopacy. Something quite like this early form of organization was before the eyes of Gentile Christians in the municipal governments under which they lived.

Another fact of importance is that this early Episcopacy was not *sacerdotal*, but *governmental*. We find that, in the second century, Christian ministers were not clothed with the attributes of a priesthood. To Irenæus and the other Fathers, down to the period of Cyprian, or the middle of the third century, bishops were not looked upon as priests. Even the germs of such a view are not to be discerned until near the end of the second century. These officials had their value principally as custodians of order, as barriers against division, and as preserving the traditions of apostolic teaching in opposition to dangerous novelties of opinion. In this relation, and for this end, the continuity of the office or the unbroken succession, was insisted on—an idea which was not unfamiliar in connection with civil offices.

But how did this primitive Episcopacy, such as it was, arise? Was it enjoined by Christ himself? Surely not. We shall search in vain for any injunction from him ordaining it. Did the Apostles decree that it should exist and be perpetuated? There is no trace of any decree of this kind

in the Apostolic writings. As concerns ordination, the terms that denoted it were for a long time the same as those which signified election or appointment to civil office. The mode of inducting the clergy into their offices was closely analogous to that which prevailed in the induction of civil officers in Roman municipalities. The laying on of hands, the chief point of difference, is not enumerated in several passages of ancient authorities—for example, in one passage in the "Apostolic Constitutions"—where the essentials of ordination are set down as included among them.* It was an old Jewish rite, used at the initiation of civil as well as ecclesiastical officers, and by the Rabbis when they sent forth their disciples on the completion of their course of study. There is no decisive proof that it was universal; and—what it is chiefly important to observe—it was nothing more than the symbolical accompaniment of a prayer that God would bestow the gifts of the Spirit. Even Augustine says that it is nothing else but a prayer.† It

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*Const. Apost. 8, 4.

†"De Baptism. c. Donatist," 3, 16. See Hatch's "Bampton Lectures," p. 132, and the article "Ordination," in Smith and Cheetham's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities." The Apostles Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritan converts. "If the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost by the laying-on of the hands of the Apostles (Acts viii, 17, 19), verse 15 shows that this was only the symbol of the prayer of the Apostles for them (compare vi, 4); and, moreover, this laying-on of hands is done with the same effect (ix, 17, compare v, 12) by one of the disciples [Ananias]. So, also, in vi, 6, the laying-on of hands only accompanies the prayer whereby the Apostles induct into their office the ministers to the poor who were chosen on account of their qualifications for the office; and an analogous introduction to the missionary work committed to Paul and Barnabas is performed by the prophets and teachers of the Antioch Church (xiii, 3), while (xiv, 23) the officers of the churches are inducted into office with prayer only." Weiss's "Biblische Theologie," § 41 d.: compare § 109, 11. The imposition of hands in the case of Timothy (I Tim. iv, 14; II Tim. i, 6) was a symbolical concomitant of prayer. In the latter of these passages the external symbol stands as a term for the whole transac-

has been justly said that "the facility with which ordinations were made and unmade"—unmade on account of slight irregularities, such as the residence of the person ordained outside of the geographical jurisdiction of the ordaining bishop—indicates that for a long period appointment to office in the churches did not differ essentially from appointment to civil offices. In later times the grace of ordination, even if irregularly conferred, was believed to be inalienable. This difference shows that ecclesiastical offices existed for the sake of order.

It is said, however, that Timothy, Titus, and other Evangelists were prelatical bishops, succeeding the Apostles, and the next links after them in the succession. According to the Pastoral Epistles, they did a work in organizing churches, analogous to that which modern missionaries perform in heathen countries. They took the lead in placing bishops or elders—that is, presbyter-bishops—in office in different congregations. But a moment's consideration will show that the local episcopate of the second century, as we have described it, was something quite different from the work done by these helpers of the Apostle Paul. If *diocesan* Episcopacy had followed, then the work fulfilled by the Evangelists might plausibly be considered the beginning of it, and later bishops might be thought to be their lineal successors. But the office of the early bishops, when they became distinguished from other presbyters, was not at all

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tion of which it was a part. See the clear exposition of Neander in "The Planting and Training of the Church" (Robinson's Ed.), p. 156. (There is a like use of the symbol to denote the things signified and accompanied by it in Heb. vi, 2.) The gift (*χάρισμα*) of Timothy was his capacity or fitness for the work to which he was appointed. It rested, like all the various "gifts" of the Spirit (I Cor. xii, 1 sq.), on native qualities, the basis of a vocation from above, but further quickened and guided by the Spirit of grace. Prayer, with the imposition of hands, was a supplication for the Spirit's influence.

a roving episcopate. It was a *local* or parochial episcopate or superintendency—as completely so as the office of any Congregational or Presbyterian pastor at the present day. There is no historic link of connection between the province of those local pastors of churches in the second century, and that of the evangelists, or apostolic helpers.* On the contrary, all the evidence points to the conclusion that it was out of the Presbyterate that the Episcopate arose. Whether the change was a natural, gradual evolution, or the result of an Apostolic ordinance, is the question to be decided.

That there was no decree of the Apostles, instituting the Episcopal, as distinguished from the Presbyterial office, is capable of being established by undeniable facts. Let us look at some things which are known respecting one of the oldest of the churches, the Church at Corinth. The Apostle Paul wrote his two epistles to that Church in the year 58. When he sent these epistles to Corinth, there is no reason to conclude that any definite Christian organization had as yet arisen there. No mention whatever is made of presbyter-bishops or of deacons. This state of things at Corinth shows how organization in the churches was a thing of degrees and a work of time. There was a like state of things among the Galatians. Now we have a glimpse of the same Church of Corinth, in the year 96, when the Church of Rome, by the hand of Clement, wrote an Epistle to the Corinthian Church. This Church had then attained

*The "Didache," or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," has thrown some new light on this topic. Here Evangelists appear under the designation of "Apostles," in the wider application of the term. They are simply missionaries, with no administrative functions, their office being a *charisma*, undertaken by a special call of the Spirit. They are forbidden to remain more than two days in one place (c. xi). Later, in Eusebius (H. E. III, 37), under the name of Evangelists, itinerant missionaries are described, who, in the second century, went from one region to another, diffusing the faith and planting churches.

to an organization. What was it? It was the same as that of so many churches in the Apostolic age. There were two offices—that of the deacons, and that of presbyters, called also by Clement, "bishops." The Apostles were dead. Probably Timothy and the other evangelists of whom mention is made in the Apostolic epistles, were all dead also. Certainly they were not exercising Episcopal functions over the Corinthians; for Clement makes not the slightest reference to them. There were no bishops (except the co-equal presbyters) at Corinth, at the period when Clement wrote. This demonstrates that the Episcopal office, as something distinct from that of presbyters, was not ordained by the Apostles. If there had been such an office at Corinth, the whole tenor of Clement's epistle makes it certain that he would have adverted to the fact. We know something of the Church of Philippi at a date subsequent to that usually claimed for the Ignatian epistles. Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians. Polycarp had then a precedence among the presbyters associated with him, and bore the name of bishop. But there is no hint that there was any such higher office at Philippi. He writes about the presbyters and the deacons in such a manner as to make it wholly improbable that such an office existed there. As Dr. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, observes: "We are thus driven to the conclusion that Episopacy did not exist at all among the Philippians at this time, or existed only in an elementary form, so that the bishop was a mere president of the presbyterial council."* As the same author says elsewhere, if there was a bishop, Polycarp, "did not think fit to separate his claim to allegiance from those of the presbyters."† Either no Episcopacy at Philippi, or a mere presidency of which Polycarp did not think it needful to take

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* Commentary on the Philippians, p. 213.

† Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius and Polycarp, Vol. II, Sect. II, p. 916.

notice. But Lightfoot is of opinion that "the ecclesiastical organization there was not yet fully developed."* Here we have one more clear sign of the gradualness of the development of this office; one more clear disproof of its being an Apostolic ordinance for all the churches. Unless you call presbyters "bishops," there was no Episcopacy at Corinth when Clement wrote his letter; there was no Episcopacy at Philippi when Polycarp wrote his. If there were room to discuss the evidence bearing on the question of the rise of the Episcopate, we should dwell on the conclusive proof afforded by the testimony of Jerome. Over and over again, he affirms that with "the ancients," bishops and presbyters were the same. The motive of the change—which he says was "gradually" made—whereby responsibility was laid on one person, was "that the thickets of heresies might be rooted out." He distinctly ascribes the superiority of bishops over presbyters to custom rather than "to any actual ordinance of the Lord."† From Jerome, corroborated by other authorities, we learn that in the great Church of Alexandria, for a long period after the Apostles' time, when the Bishop's chair became vacant, the twelve presbyters placed in it one of their own number. If there was any act of consecration, it was merely the imposition of hands by the presbytery. This is evident from the purpose of Jerome in appealing to the Alexandrian usage, and from his illustrations in the context.‡ But there is no proof that anything was done except to conduct the bishop elect to the vacant chair. The lately discovered "Teaching of the

* Apostolic Fathers: P. I, Vol. I, 578.

† On Tit. i, 5. See also Jerome's Epistles, lxix, cxlvi.

‡ For a more full statement of the proofs on this point, see Gieseler's Church History, vol. i, c. iii, § 34, n. 1, and Lightfoot's Philippians, p. 228 sq. Canon Gore questions the correctness of Jerome, but not with full confidence. He falls back on the supposition that Episcopal functions may have been committed to presbyters by their ordination, —a temporary *jure divino* Presbyterianism.

Twelve Apostles" is one of the documents which prove that, in the early part of the second century, there were not wanting churches in which the office of bishops and that of presbyters were one and the same. "Episcopacy had not yet become universal." * It is true that early in the second century—precisely at what date we cannot with positiveness determine—Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, lets us know that there were bishops in Syria and Asia Minor, whose prerogative he is anxious to enhance. But his bishops are local, or parochial; he deems them to be the successors, not of the Apostles, but of Christ; he makes no mention of any bishop as existing at Rome, in his letter to the Christians at that place; and although he speaks of bishops in distant places—possibly having in mind the churches of Gaul, which were founded from Asia Minor—he nowhere speaks of Episcopacy as universal. It is true that Irenæus, late in the same century, tells us of a succession of bishops in all the principal churches. But the same Irenæus plainly falls into the mistake of regarding the Ephesian elders who met the Apostle Paul at Miletus † as "the Bishops and Presbyters which were of Ephesus, and of other towns in the neighborhood"‡—which demonstrates that he antedated the origin of the Episcopal system. He imagined that the precedence of the bishop among the presbyters, with which he, a native of Asia Minor, had been familiar, reached back even into the lifetime of Paul. It is important to observe that Irenæus himself speaks of the "successiones episcoporum" and the "successiones presbyterorum" as equivalent designations; he applies to the office of presbyters the name "episcopate," and applies the term ἐπισχόπους (from Isaiah ix, 17) to "presbyters." The early heads of the § Roman Church, Anicetus,

* Lightfoot's Apostolic Fathers, p. 216.

† Acts xx, 16. ‡ Adv. Haer., III, 14, 2.

§ Adv. Haer., iii, 3. 2, iii, 2. 2, iv, 26. 2, iv, 26. 5.

Pius, and others, he calls, "presbyters," and styles Polycarp that "blessed and apostolic presbyter."* This language implies that he held to no essential distinction between the respective functions of "bishop" and "presbyter." An early presidency among the presbyters at Rome suffices to account for the representations of this Father respecting a line of bishops there. A variety of proofs point to the conclusion that it was in Syria and Asia Minor, a region with which Irenæus was early acquainted, that Episcopacy first arose. That precedence accorded to James, the brother of the Lord, in the Church of Jerusalem, furnished an example which may have paved the way for it. If the mistake of Irenæus, to which I have referred, proves that Episcopacy began early, it also indicates that it arose gradually, and did not spring into being from any explicit ordinance. Tradition ascribed the change in the organization of the Asia Minor churches to the agency of the Apostle John, and to a desire on his part to prevent divisions and to promote order. This tradition may have in it a kernel of truth. But we must guard, in the first place, against magnifying the change which established a presidency in the board of elders, where there had been co-equal presbyter-bishops. We must guard, secondly, against the wholly unproved and unauthorized notion that, even according to the tradition referred to, John instituted such an arrangement for the churches everywhere. "There is no reason," says Bishop Lightfoot, "for supposing that any direct ordinance was issued to the churches."† This is true even as to the churches in that neighborhood. Moreover, could it be shown that John or any of the other Apostles directed or recommended that bishops should be appointed, it would still be a great leap in logic to infer that such a polity was

* Eusebius, H. E. v. 24, v. 20. Cf. Smith and Cheetham (ut supra), pp. 1702, 1701.

† Com. on Philippians, p. 205.

decreed by them as something necessary in the Church for all time—so necessary that, if it were not kept up, the Church would cease to be a lawfully existing Christian community, and the Lord's Supper be stripped of the spiritual benefit which it was appointed to confer on believing recipients. However, the evidence for Episcopacy as an Apostolic ordinance is wanting. Historical scholarship at present denies its sanction to such an hypothesis. Some of the most learned and convincing refutations of it have emanated of late from writers of high standing in the Church of England. The verdict in which scholars, who pursue these researches without the unconscious but misleading bias of ecclesiastical motives, for the most part unite, is that the Episcopate as a distinct office arose naturally out of the Presbyterate, under the influence of circumstances which strongly favored its early and general development. A simple presidency in the board of elders by degrees grew into an office of increased importance.* With Ignatius, bishops are the means of securing unity and preventing divisions; with Irenæus, late in the second century, bishops are the means of preserving sound doctrine by handing down the traditions of Apostolic teaching; not until Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, do bishops become the channels of conveying a grace qualifying for a priestly office. When it is borne in mind that for a long period, Episcopacy was valued for its governmental uses, it will be felt to be a supposition in the highest degree improb-

*The appropriation to the president of the elders of the title ἐπισκόπος, one of the two synonyms which were applied at first to all of them indiscriminately, accords with a familiar custom of language. It is illustrated, for example, in the history even of such words as "abbot," "patriarch," "pope." That the importance of the financial responsibility which devolved on the president, and the association, in secular use, of this function with the term ἐπισκόπος, was not without its influence, is probable. Whether this consideration had the weight which Dr. Hatch ascribes to it, may be questioned.

able that it was ordained for the Church and for all time. A supposition of this sort coheres well only with the sacerdotal theory of the ministry, which does not belong to the second century.

The theory that there can be no Church without prelatical bishops was never maintained by Episcopalians in England until the days when a school of theologians, who were at the same time supporters of the tyranny of the Stuarts, brought it forward, and used it in the controversy with Puritanism. The claim had been that the constitution of the national Episcopal Church of England was lawful, and that Episcopacy was the form of government in use in the primitive Church. This had been asserted, and nothing more.* There had been no objection to intercommunion

* The statement in the preface to the Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer respecting three "orders of ministers" is often appealed to as a proof that prelatical Episcopacy was held by the framers of the Ordinal to be an Apostolic ordinance and necessary to the existence of a church. But nothing of the kind is affirmed. It is simply asserted that these offices have existed since Christ's time and are to be continued in the Church of England. The term "orders" was often used, as by the early Fathers, to signify, in the general sense, rank or eminent rank. The statement in the preface is antithetical to the Roman doctrine of *seven* orders. For the proof of this statement see the instructive note A., pp. 23, 29, in Dr. Edwin Harwood's valuable essay, "The Historic Episcopate" (New York, Thomas Whittaker, 1888). Peter Lombard, Aquinas, and the mediæval doctors generally, regarded the Episcopate as embraced in the priesthood, but with special functions attached. That presbyter and bishop were identical as to order was the view of the Roman Catholic Church until the epoch of the Reformation. A comparison of the Ordinal with the same as altered in 1661, after the Restoration, shows how much was done at this time to emphasize the distinction between the two offices of bishop and priest. For example, prior to 1661, Acts xx, which describes the meeting of Ephesian elders with Paul, and I Tim. iii, were read both at the ordaining of a priest and the consecration of a bishop. Both these portions of Scripture were now assigned to the service for the consecration of a bishop exclusively. The latter passage—I Tim. iii, 1–8—relates to the character and work of a "bishop."

with foreign Reformed Churches. A statute of Elizabeth even made room for the admission of ministers of foreign birth, not Episcopally ordained, to English parishes; and for a long time they were thus admitted without opposition.*

The truth in this matter is so clearly stated by an able scholar in Church history, an American Episcopal clergyman, that I prefer to quote his language. "There was not

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But even in the later form of the Ordinal there is no condemnation of the orders of non-episcopal churches. The bishops sent to Scotland in 1610 presided over Presbyterian clergy, and there is no proof that this was not the case in regard to the bishops consecrated for Scotland in 1661. "Cranmer's Catechism" is sometimes erroneously thought to give evidence of a change of opinion on his part. But this Catechism was a translation of the Lutheran Catechism of Justus Jonas; and the passage on Apostolic succession is based on a writing of Luther, where he is showing that the Apostolic method of inducting ministers into office was by the laying-on of hands, and not "by chrism or butter." Cranmer's translation is only the repetition of what was said by Luther and in the Catechism of Jonas. On this subject and on the dependence of English Protestant formularies and other writings on Lutheran sources—which is often understated by modern English writers—see an article by Professor H. E. Jacobs, in the *Lutheran Church Review* for July, 1888.

*Lord Bacon probably wrote his "Advertisement Concerning Controversies of the Church of England" in 1589. After saying that some stiff defenders of Episcopacy were beginning to condemn their opponents as a "sect," he adds: "Yea, and some indiscreet persons have been bold in open preaching to use dishonorable and derogative speech and censure of the [Protestant] churches abroad: and that so far as some of our men, as I have heard, ordained in foreign parts, have been pronounced to be no lawful ministers." Bishop Joseph Hall, the most conspicuous defender of Episcopacy just prior to the civil war, in his "Defence of the Humble Remonstrance," says: "I know those, more than one, that by virtue only of that ordination which they have brought with them from other Reformed Churches, have enjoyed spiritual promotion and livings, without any exception against the lawfulness of their callings." Of the fact thus stated by Bishop Hall, on his own personal knowledge, there is abundant proof from other sources.

one leading divine, from Hooper to Hooker, who ever claimed more than historic and primitive usage as the ground of Episcopal authority, or pretended that it was of the essence of the Church. I challenge safely the proof. Whitgift, the High Churchman of Elizabeth's time, in his reply to the attack of Cartwright against the prelacy, as not prescript in God's word, distinctly affirmed that to hold it of necessity that we have the same kind of government as in the Apostle's time and expressed in Scripture is a 'rotten pillar.' It was the Puritan of that day who held this view and was the narrow theorist. It is the Anglo-Catholic of our own time who takes Puritan ground. If we read, as so many do, the words of the Prayer Book, as maintaining more than the assertion of the historic fact, we simply deny the whole *catena* of early English divinity. Not only so. No notion of an exclusive Episcopacy, even in later times, when Bancroft and Laud had naturalized it, gained footing as a Church principle. Field, Bramhall, Hall, Ussher did not hold it. Morton, although bitter against the Presbyterians and not without reason, declared that 'he could never unchurch the bodies of the continent for an infelicity, not a fault.'"*

*Dr. E. A. Washburn's "Epochs in Church History," p. 120. Hooker's position is intermediate between that of the Reformers and that of the High Church School of the Caroline age. In his earlier days, as he tells us, he held with his master, Jewel, that the bishop was originally one of the presbyters, raised to a presidency over his fellows, and that this change took place after the days of the Apostles. (B. VII, xi, 8.) He came afterwards to hold that the Episcopate was from the beginning distinct. But he had no disposition to unchurch the foreign Protestant bodies, since he considered that their non-episcopal polity grew out of the necessities of their situation. Moreover, in accordance with his general theory of government, Hooker held that the powers of the Church are such that it is competent for the Church to abolish the Episcopate altogether if need be. This interpretation is questioned, but not on sufficient grounds. What he says respecting Jerome—although he misinterprets Jerome—implies

It must be remembered, also, that from the beginnings of their history the practice in both the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches has been to set apart their ministers by the rite of ordination, which included the laying-on of the hands of ministers previously set apart for the same office. It is what may be styled Presbyterial or Congregational, as distinguished from Episcopal, ordination. It thus appears that there has been an uninterrupted succession in the ministry of both of these Churches which connects itself with the main historical stem. Unless, then, it is claimed—what the fathers of the English Reformation certainly did not claim—that ordination by presbyters is not sufficient to make a minister, the right of our ministry to exercise their functions cannot be successfully impeached. The links in the succession here are quite as easily pointed out as in the line of the clergy, of whatever order, in the Anglican Communion.

In 1886 the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country sent forth a document which may be called an olive branch in the cause of Christian union. As such it deserves from all lovers of peace a respectful and kindly consideration. Especially when the history of the American churches is taken into view, it is clear that an appeal of this nature merits at our hands candid attention. Many of the old points of contention between us and the Episcopalians have passed away. In America, that union of Church and State, involving the subjection of the Church to the civil authority, against which our fathers rebelled, has no existence. The prelatical system with the pains and penalties annexed to it in the law of England, which called out the great Puritan revolt, is a thing of the past. The tyranny of Whitgift and Laud would not be less repugnant to liberty-

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that he (Hooker) attributed to the Church this ample, reserved authority. (B. VII, v, 8.)

loving American Episcopalians than to New England Congregationalists. In important particulars, the American Episcopal Church, with its lay representation in the ruling bodies, differs from the polity which still continues in the National Church of England. On the other hand, New England Puritanism, as well as American Presbyterianism, hath smoothed its "wrinkled front." Modes of worship and customs of Christian life, which formed a part of the ground of resistance made to sacerdotalism in the Church, and to the enforcement of "traditions of the elders" as a binding law, are now disappearing. We do not abjure the observance of time-honored festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, even if no Biblical command can be adduced in support of it. Nor do we put under the ban Gothic architecture, windows of stained glass, or organ music. We read the Scriptures in church; we connect a religious service with the marriage ceremony. We do not regard the use of written prayers as prohibited, and while unwilling to give up the use of extemporaneous supplication in the public services of religion, we find ourselves edified by the litanies and collects which have been handed down from other lands and ages. There is a cordial willingness in each of these divisions of Christian people to recognize whatever worth of character, and beauty and beneficence in the Christian life, are manifested by the other. More and more there is coöperation in various channels of religious and philanthropic action. Proposals looking to a more intimate union of these ecclesiastical bodies, which spring from a common parentage, surely are entitled to a hospitable acknowledgment.

But what is the nature of the union that is suggested? The oneness which Christ predicted of his followers, and which he prayed might continue, was a spiritual unity. It was a unity in heart and mind, imaged by the unity of the Son and the Father. As to visible unity, what are we to

desire? Such a unity as Rome asserts and demands is what the English Church, from the Reformation until now, has repudiated. The Protestant ideal, in England as elsewhere, was National Churches, each independent in its government and ceremonies, but standing in intercommunion with one another. If the invitation of the American bishops to accept the "historic Episcopate" be an invitation to enter the Episcopal Church, it is just like the invitation which every one of the different denominations is, all the time, practically presenting to their fellow-Christians. Even the Pope of Rome sent out a missive, before the Vatican Council, appealing to all baptized persons to return to the fold of the universal shepherd, who assumes to fill the office of St. Peter. Or the meaning of the American bishops may be that the adoption of the "historic Episcopate" is a necessary step to *intercommunion* between the Episcopal Church and—for example—the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. But if this be the meaning, and the various denominations are not to be absorbed, or brought under the superintending authority of bishops of the Episcopal Church as it now exists, such a plan would bring in a plurality of prelatical bishops in each district or portion of our territory.* Leaving the

*In the Report of the Committee of the House of Bishops, it was stated that the [Episcopal] Church did "not seek to absorb other Communions, but to coöperate with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, and to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ." The report placed among the essentials for "the restoration of unity" "the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations," etc. The report expressed a desire "to enter into brotherly conference with other Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic Unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions," etc. The Lambeth Conference of 1888, for the purpose of "supplying the basis on which approach might be, under God's blessing, made toward reunion with non-conforming bodies," adopted substantially the Articles of the American Report, the principal differ-

question of interpretation, I remark that the recommendation of the Episcopate, which the overture of the bishops involves, has to encounter a serious difficulty. If it were a suggestion that the adoption of Episcopal government, including the system of ordination by prelatical bishops, would be a means of promoting unity, and of putting an end to sectarian divisions, not a little might be said in behalf of such a proposal. But where a suggestion of this character is put in the form of an indispensable condition of ecclesiastical fellowship, then it virtually calls upon us to allow that the Episcopate in the historic line is of the essence of the Church. It makes of Prelacy what Luther made justification by faith to be—the article of a standing or falling Church. This is too large a demand. There are those who might have no quarrel with Prelacy as a form of government. There are those who, for the sake of peace and union, might be willing even to resign their preferences for another scheme of polity. But to say by word or act that Prelatical government, with or without the accompaniment of an alleged Apostolic succession, is a part of the substance of the Christian religion—"a part," to quote from the American bishops, "of the sacred deposit of Christian faith and order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church"—this is too much to expect of the descendants of the Puritans of England or the Presbyterians of Scotland. It is too much to expect of impartial students of the first two centuries of Christian history.

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ence being the addition of the Apostles' Creed to the Nicene Creed, in the doctrinal article. The Lambeth Conference styles its articles "a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made toward 'Home Reunion.'" In its Encyclical Letter it expresses a readiness to enter "into brotherly conference with any of those who may desire intercommunion with us in a more or less perfect form." "We lay down conditions"—so reads the Letter—"on which such intercommunion is, in our opinion, and according to our conviction, possible."

Bear in mind that, according to the general conviction of Protestants, the idea of a special priesthood in the Church was a principal fountain of corruption in doctrine and practice, from the day when that idea crept in. When the Prelatical polity is held to be enjoined of God, it is extremely difficult to keep out the sacerdotal idea as the basis and warrant of this tenet. I venture to suggest that the offer of Episcopacy would have a greater chance of acceptance were it preceded by or attended with a frank offer of intercommunion, whether Prelatical Episcopacy were accepted or not. The advantages of a more moderate theory of Episcopal government, apart from its being the only tenable ground in view of the facts of history, are manifold. It affords an escape from the embarrassment which arises from the juxtaposition of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, each claiming jurisdiction in the same territory, both professing to stand in the true line of Apostolic Succession, and the Anglican, at least, conceding to the Roman Catholic the justice of his claim. If the fundamental doctrine of the Apostolic Succession, and of grace transmitted in the act of ordination, be affirmed, it is not so easy to see how the demand of allegiance on the part of a Roman Catholic bishop, in a land like ours, where there is no establishment of religion, can be resisted. If it is said that his place in the succession has not kept him from falling into such error as justifies the ignoring of his priestly character, what amount of error shall be considered sufficient to divest him of sacerdotal authority?

Christian union, for which, as we hear, there is a yearning on all sides, will not be attained by artificial agencies. It will not come to pass through diplomatic negotiations and compromises, and by treaties framed by eccleciastical leaders. Historical science will have something to do in bringing to pass this result. That no specific form of Church government can boast of being an Apostolic ordi-

nance for all time is a verdict which historical scholars are rapidly approaching unanimity in rendering. The divine right of a particular form of Church organization will follow the divine right of kings, and repose in the same tomb. The over-valuing of externals in religion will be seen to be at variance with the whole drift of the teaching of Christ, and with the nature of the Christian, as distinguished from the Old Testament, dispensation. A sense of the supreme importance of the Christian spirit, of the religion of the heart, will more and more impress all religious bodies with the comparative insignificance of the differences in polity, over which there has been so hot contention. The deep import of the words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria concerning worship will be better understood. The battle which all Christian believers have to wage with materialistic atheism will quicken their mutual sympathies, and make them conscious that they have a common cause. The conflict which Protestants, as a body, have to carry forward in opposition to the pretensions and dogmas of Rome, will convince them that no half-way ground is tenable, and move them to take up a position such as the Protestant Reformers in all countries were once united in holding. More than all, the impulse to practice coöperation in doing good in the name of Christ, will impel Christian men, of whatever name or form of worship, to overleap the barriers of sect. The Shibboleths of party will one day cease to be heard. The process of undermining the walls that part good men from one another is going forward with a silent but irresistible energy. Now that the non-Christian nations with their diverse religions, are brought into close intercourse with the Christian peoples; now that we cannot avoid the competition with rival systems, the traditional religions of countless multitudes of the human race, sectarian warfare is more and more felt to be both disgraceful and perilous. Something like a united front must be presented by the professed

believers in the Gospel, if they are not prepared to disregard the prayer of Christ that his disciples might be one, in order, as he said, "that the world may know that thou hast sent me." It is our wisdom, then, not to magnify points of dissent among Christian churches, but to lay due emphasis on whatever they hold and practice in common, to make rightful and useful concessions for the sake of union among brethren, and to watch for providential indications which appear to point to a path in which all the sincere adherents of our common faith may walk together.

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